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Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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Feldt to represent Wisconsin in National Teacher of the Year program

MADISON—Citing her energy and innovation to motivate all students, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster announced today that Mary J. Feldt, a physical education teacher and Wisconsin's Elementary Teacher of the Year, will represent the state in the National Teacher of the Year program.

"Mary teaches the joy of physical movement so students will experience success and make fitness and exercise lifetime activities," Burmaster said. "Young people gain knowledge and skills in physical education that supports their learning in other subject areas and advances our efforts to close the achievement gap."

Feldt of Almond, Wisconsin's 2005-06 Elementary Teacher of the Year, teaches physical education at the Waupaca Learning Center in Waupaca.

"I love my job. I live my job," Feldt said of her methods for inspiring students' learning. "It is my job to prepare students for a lifetime. I want, and they need, that lifetime to include a healthy attitude about exercise and self worth." Noting that far too many adults suffered embarrassment and failure in physical education classes, Feldt says she strives "to instill in my students the enjoyment of movement and play."



Mary J. Feldt
Elementary Teacher of the Year

Feldt takes physical education beyond traditional team sports to offer lots of opportunities for lifetime activities and cooperative games with "participation taking precedence over competition." She says, "I often tell my students that 20 years from now they aren't likely to run into 25 of their friends and start a game of dodge ball. However, they may enjoy walking, dancing, a round of golf, or another physical activity." Thus, Feldt teaches outdoor education skills, including cross country skiing, snow

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shoeing, curling, walking, and hiking among activities in her classes. A recently developed Enviro-Camp took students and parents camping in a nearby state park to combine environmental education and physical activity in a “meaningful and fun outdoor experience.” A student’s comment about the fun of using a wheelchair turned into lessons exposing students to the many daily activities they take for granted. Feldt’s Wheelchair Obstacle course was among lessons she had accepted for publication on the PECentral website.

“One of the advantages of teaching elementary-age children is that I can watch my former students grow and mature in the six years that I have them and also when they leave our school and move on to middle and high school,” she said. Feldt notes that she rarely watches a whole middle or high school sporting event because she is “visiting with the many students who have touched my life. They often tell me how they are doing in physical education and sports, but also what new challenges they are facing and how they are handling those situations.”

Practicing what she preaches, Feldt’s students will see her join them in class, walk during her lunch break, kayak at a state park, or participate in a local sporting event. “The success of a physically educated person is not necessarily determined by a test or an isolated athletic performance,” Feldt said. “That success, or lack of it, may not be evident for years. My goal in preparing students is that they will pursue some type of physical activity for personal fitness and enjoyment in their future.” Her teaching challenge is to harness the technology that has children playing computer and video games and watching television into a positive force to encourage more exercise and physical movement.

Feldt is an active community volunteer, who took the Movin’ Schools campaign to Waupaca’s Movin’ Community program. She also has been involved in youth sports, Cub Scouts, community food drives, roadside clean-ups, Bread Basket, the school district’s wellness committee, and the Waupaca County Nutrition and Activity coalition.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in wellness and health promotions and a master’s degree in physical education from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

A state selection committee recommended Feldt for the national award program from among the state’s four teachers of the year. Feldt and the others— Edith Krueger, social studies and language arts teacher at Stanley-Boyd Middle School; Linda Gabby, English teacher at Wauwatosa East High School; and Anne Reece, special education teacher at Converse Elementary School in Beloit—were selected from a pool of 86 Kohl Teacher Fellowship recipients.

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NOTE: Visit the Department of Public Instruction news release website to view photos of the state’s four 2005-06 Teachers of the Year < <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/eis/prmenu.html> >.